

CEDAR POINT: WHO WILL TELL THE TRUTH?; ALDRICH/PEEKE?

[Annotations, '2025', by "C.P.P.-I.C."]

Two of the sources most-often referenced for later “histories” of “Cedar Point”, were two histories of Erie County (OH); one by L.C. Aldrich, (publ.1889), and one by (local-attorney) H.L. Peeke, (publ.1916). (Also see a '1945' history, below.)

Here is what Aldrich asserted (under the, then, current businesses, in the sub-chapter “City of Sandusky”), specifically about the “Cedar Point” resort, in existence in '1889':

In 1882 B. F. Dwelle leased the Point from its owners, Mrs. Adolf and Mr. Stoll, and proceeded to make improvements upon it with a view to attracting pleasure seekers to its shores. The first thing to be done was to build a dock where boats could land their passengers, and then a steamboat began making trips across. After partially clearing a part of the land, a walk was built across from the bay to the lake; a house was erected on the side near the bay, and later bathing houses were put up on the lake shore, and Sanduskians began to enjoy their resort by forming parties and excursions to Cedar Point. Mr. Dwelle expended five thousand dollars on Cedar Point, paying no rental for the first season; a moderate amount for the second, with the same rate of increase each year for the five of his lease. All this time the resort grew in favor. The steamboat, *Hayes*, made frequent trips, and the bay was aflutter with white-winged sailing vessels through the summer months. So popular did Cedar Point became that boats could scarcely be supplied to meet the demand, and newer and better sailing craft were added to the stock on hand.

[Occasionally, “grammatical”(etc.) errors occurred during the manual type-setter process.]

In a previous paragraph, Aldrich had made it very clear that his references to “Cedar Point” meant the “peninsula”*, in general. [*now, an 'island', after 1969]

Aldrich didn't mention any prior recreational enterprises being anywhere upon the various areas on “Cedar Point”, prior to “1882”. Was that because there hadn't been any prior enterprises? --- or simply because none of the others had any direct business-connection to “Dwelle's” enterprise? But, of course, there are recorded (elsewhere) to have been several prior, (simple “bathhouse”) enterprises operating intermittently and independently upon this many-miles-long “peninsula”, beginning as early as '1858'. Obviously, Aldrich's intent was not to belabor the entire 'history' of the whole “peninsula”, but merely to state the specific and precise origins of the, then, existing enterprise. [Although, Aldrich's choice of wording, “*Dwelle leased the Point*”, was misleading. Dwelle had merely leased the portion of the peninsula's wider area which is generally now, still, 'Cedar Point' resort; but which had not previously been utilized for 'resort' enterprises, prior to Dwelle. (Nor, were those other areas of this long “peninsula” owned by “Adolph and Stoll”. In fact, other, narrower portions of the many-miles-long “peninsula”, had been advocated as being public-property.)]

Aldrich continues:

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Boat building and renting is now an established business, and although some of the firms own forty or fifty boats, it frequently happens that every boat is out, and the party waiting must give up their sail until another day. With the delightful breeze of the water; the pursuit of pleasure under its many forms, such as fishing, picnicking, gathering pond-lilies and bathing, the summer in Sandusky is a season of continued gaiety and delight. Under a new arrangement the Point is now leased to a company of five gentlemen, including its former proprietor, Mr. Dwelle. These men are alive to the possibilities of the place and enter heartily into its development until the Cedar Point of the future will rival any of the resorts of our sea-boards in attractive features. A building is to be erected on the farther shore to combine all the features of amusement and entertainment to be found at the fashionable watering places. The old walk across the Point will be taken up and relaid by a plank walk twelve feet wide; grounds will be cleared and beautified and the delightful stroll to the lighthouse made more agreeable. This company expect to make an outlay of \$20,000 the coming season. The new building will be one hundred and fifty feet long by eighty wide.

(To reiterate), although that book was published in the year “1889”; but: Aldrich was obviously referring to the “Grand Pavilion”, which was constructed in Spring of 1888. Therefore, Aldrich had written that part of his 'history', just prior to that construction; but, also, written it prior to the 'news' that this “new” resort would be officially named 'Cedar Point Pleasure Resort'. (Also, therefore, Aldrich's reference to “*the coming season*”, meant the 1888 season, which clearly had not yet begun at the time Aldrich had actually written this information.)

[Dwelle's original enterprise is not recorded to have had any specific 'name'. Nor did the several other simple “bathhouse” enterprises seem to have specific names, except the “*Eagle Bath Houses*” that had been established by T.J. Moore, on a different portion of this “peninsula”, just prior to Dwelle's separate enterprise.)

So, Aldrich can be credited for reasonably reporting the true beginnings of the modern-day 'Cedar Point' resort. But, the later misinterpretations (and manipulations) of his (1888) writings, resulted in all the various, ludicrous “histories” which followed.

Speaking of which --- here is what (local-attorney) **H.L. Peeke** asserted:

{ TO BE CONTINUED but, just some "low-lights"}:

Peeke blatantly plagiarized two entire sections from Aldrich's "Cedar Point" narrative.

Peeke credits "Mr. Devoe" as being "a man of some prominence" (despite Peeke not even acknowledging that “*Mr.*” Devoe had a first-name: Frederick); but, worse, Peeke credits "Mr. Devoe" as having "prophetic insight", and as being a "prophet without honor in his own country". Such high praise, for that same man who tried to steal Cedar Point (peninsula) from William Winthrop, (and then, subsequently, Winthrop's nephew had to sue Devoe and Devoe's associates, to successfully regain possession of “Cedar Point”).

Peeke then (conveniently) skips over several (readily available) Cedar Point ownership property-transfers. (And, Peeke wrongly attributed A.M. Porter as being "the proprietor of the the Steamboat Hotel"; but that hotel was named "Veranda Hotel" during Porter's proprietorship.)

Peeke also (conveniently) skips the (then-well-known, especially by him**) fact that the "Cedar Point Pleasure Resort Company" was organized in OHIO in 1887. (The '1897' “corporation” was named "*Cedar Point Pleasure Resort Company Of Indiana*".)

One accurate statement by Peeke, was that the "new" shareholders of the '1897' (“Indiana”) company merely consisted of most of the same former (Ohio) owners of the '1887' (Ohio) company. However, "B.F. Dwelle" was not a shareholder in the '1897' (“Indiana”) company. The "new" shareholders of the '1897' company, had succeeded, (seemingly with lies*), in confiscating Dwelle's share of the '1887' company.

[*such as, “the resort was no longer profitable”]

But, Peeke also stated:

"In 1898 the property was sold to an Indiana corporation of which G. A. Boeckling was the president[?] and immediately[??] developments were started on a large scale."

Surely, Peeke (a local-attorney**) was fully aware that all(?) of the (4?) shareholders of the (new) "Indiana corporation" were the local owners of “the property”, who simply converted their ownership in the "property", for 'stock' shares of their own (new) "Indiana corporation"; fully aware, because Peeke, himself, **was one of the attorneys directly involved during those proceedings! [The creation of the “Indiana corporation” seems to have merely been a 'ruse'; but that subject is for legal-scholars to sort-out. (However, the entire truth might never be known, about that.)]

R.K. Ramsey's

"a brief history, for the Firelands Historical Society"(1922),

“CEDAR POINT-ON-LAKE ERIE”,

“the nomenclature adopted by its proprietors”,

should also be mentioned here. Ramsey asserted:

[Mr.] Hills' [partial ownership] interests in [the peninsula named] Cedar Point were sold upon execution; and purchased by the children of Alexander M. Porter. The title breaks with Hills' grantees, and this defect in the title was later quieted by proceedings for that purpose.""

Ramsey was referring specifically to the southeasterly (narrower) portion of the "peninsula". Local-attorney Ramsey's (legalese) wording, "the title breaks", meant that, in the latter part of the 19th-Century, there was essentially no 'private' ownership of that entire narrow portion. And, although it is not yet determined when,(or even if truly*), the "children of A.M. Porter" legitimately had acquired Mr. Hills' portion; but, regardless, they never later paid taxes on it, nor was it ever 'seized' for any back-taxes, by the County/State --- simply because it was not considered to be own-able during that time, due to its extreme susceptibility to erosion. Which is why, (many, many decades later), a subsequent "Cedar Point" operating-company had to "forcefully" reclaim it; and therefore (in legalese) "later quieted by proceedings for that purpose".

And, apparently during that process, (local-attorney) Ramsey was a "Cedar Point attorney" handling that process. But, regardless, seemingly during that process, the "Carrying Grounds" were (also?) improperly "reclaimed"; because the "Carrying Grounds" were always 'public' land.

[*- After A.M. Porter had died, (in 1852), his 'estate' administrators later oddly sold “all” of this peninsula; therefore as fully being a part of that 'estate'; but, according to Ramsey's assertions, therefore the estate administrators wrongly (illegally?) had included portions of this “peninsula” which were not truly owned by Porter's 'estate', (which would seem to invalidate that entire transaction??). Nor could “Porter's children”, themselves, legitimately have purchased any portion of this peninsula, during that entire decade, because they were all 'minors'. So, it's not any wonder why the entire mess had to be "later quieted by proceedings for that purpose". [But, was that later “quieting” process also illegal, if it had likewise included the public “Carrying-grounds”? (Why didn't the local government prevent that inclusion??)]

Additionally, Ramsey totally skips the 1882-'87 precursor enterprise which, in 1888, became 'Cedar Point Pleasure Resort'. Perhaps, was that omission maybe because (attorney) Ramsey knew that unscrupulous activities had later occurred (in 1897), surrounding the "incorporation" of the 'Cedar Point Pleasure Resort Company of Indiana' in Indianapolis; and therefore, Ramsey knew that if he detailed the (Dwelle-Slackford) 1882-'87 precursor enterprise, then any potentially unscrupulous activities (a decade afterward), would become apparent??

Another, related, anomaly is that Ramsey attributed the "Indiana incorporation", to "certain representatives of the Lake Erie & Western railroad"; and they subsequently "brought into the [“new” C.P.P.R. comp.] organization, a resident of Indiana, Mr. George A. Boeckling, who became the manager of the new enterprise".

But, Ramsey blatantly failed to mention, that none of those (partially contrived?*) details, had any direct connection to the actual initial ownership of the "Cedar Point Pleasure Resort Company of Indiana". [* but, a later “CP representative”, Bill Evans, said “*Michigan Central r.r.*”; so, which was true? Or were both versions simply concocted to conceal the truth about the 1897 “Indiana incorporation”?]

However, Ramsey might be the only prior “published Cedar Point historian” who actually stated the official precise name of this 'resort' enterprise, at that time: “CEDAR POINT-ON-LAKE ERIE”.

{ This publication is an installment in the 'CEDAR POINT: WHO WILL TELL THE TRUTH?' series of publications by “C.P.P.-I.C.” (freely available at archive.org)}

See more about R.K. Ramsey, in “Phase 2” of “Cedar Point Pleasure Resort”, there.

Also:

SANDUSKY REGISTER-STAR-NEWS

APRIL 26, 1945

Early History Of Cedar Point Is Recalled By Sandusky Man



The old pavilion and band stand at Cedar Point in 1889.

(Editor's Note: This is another feature compiled and written for The Register-Star-News by Alex H. Osterman, 1405 Camp-st. Mr. Osterman, who has an intimate knowledge of early Sandusky, has presented many interesting items which are much enjoyed by the readers of this newspaper.)

In the past 50 years there have been many newcomers added to the population of our city who in many instances have been attracted to the city by its cleanliness, its landlocked water front and its ideal summer resorts. Many are they who come just for a day's outing and were so impressed that in time they became permanent citizens, for they realized the many advantages that were to be had and more so the recreation to be had at Cedar Point and the surrounding islands.

And now to the origin of Cedar Point. Back in the latter '70's and early '80's four men just in their prime had the foresight of a future for that narrow strip of land that projected north of Slate Cut; a strip of sand that today is known the world over as the Atlantic City of the West, with seven miles of bathing beach. Now let us return to those four men, who were responsible for the popularity of this present day fine resort.

It all started when Jacob Kuebler, B. F. Dwelle, Louis Adolph and A. J. Stoll built a two story building just north of the boat landing, the lower floor being used as a bar and dance hall and the upper floor as living quarters for the caretaker, Jack Butts who later in life became superintendent of Oakland Cemetery. In these early days of Cedar Point the Steamer R. B. Hayes would make trips to and from the Point as business and patrons required and seldom did the Hayes make the trips after dark. At that time there was no other attraction but the bathing beach and to get to the beach there was a board walk where now the wide concrete walk takes you across to the beach.

In those earlier days when the water in the bay and lake was high, this board walk was at a point where now the postoffice building is located, and the walk was under water and impassable. On the beach here and there small box like shanties dotted the beach. These were used by the bathers to change their clothes to go in bathing. I might mention that in those early days there was considerable wild game on the Point and the writer's father with a group of other men crossed over on the ice to hunt fox.

Now let us return to the summer of 1888 when the aforementioned men formed a stock company under the name of The Cedar Point Resort Co. They let a contract to August Fettel, a local contractor, who built a large pavilion on the site of the present cafeteria. This pavilion was large and spacious with a balcony three quarters around the building. On the inside, as well as on the outside, at the extreme north end was a large stage upon

which the then famous Great Western Band would give an hour's concert and following this there was an hour of vaudeville, after which tables and chairs were removed from the north half of the spacious hall and the patrons could dance until 11:30, for the last boat always left at 12 midnight. This and the three mile boat ride, all for 25 cents.

The opening of Cedar Point as a summer resort took place in May 1889. All was in readiness for this grand opening and what a disappointment that opening week must have been to the stockholders after such a heavy expenditure. There are some of us yet living who recall the terrible downpour of rain for five days and nights. That was the week the dam broke at Johnstown, Pa., and flooded that entire city. After that awful week of rain the skies cleared and things at the Point took on a more pleasant aspect as Cedar Point became the most popular resort on the Great Lakes

and it was rather a common sight to see as many as 10 excursion trains arriving at the foot of Columbus-av to discharge their passengers, all bound for Cedar Point.

Along about 1898, George A. Boeckling visited the Point and was so much impressed that he immediately contacted Mr. Kuebler and in conference with him expressed the wonderful possibilities that up to that time lay dormant. After this conference it was only a short time when things began to happen. Mr. Boeckling replaced Charles Baetz as manager; the spacious pavilion was converted into the present cafeteria and dining room. Other buildings were changed to locations made suitable for their new purposes. A lagoon was dredged so as to enable small boats as well as supply scows to bring supplies nearer to the distribution point.

The large Hotel Breakers was built on the lake side; the Cedars Hotel on the bay side where once the first small dance hall stood. Then about 1912 or thereabouts when the autos began to make their appearance again, Mr. Boeckling could see the necessity of the seven mile highway paralleling that beautiful beach. With this came the necessity of large free parking spaces and also the endless rows of garages. The large dance hall with its rathskeller and the beautiful shaded picnic grounds, its midway and the large bath house. In all of this construction work I wish to remind my readers that due to the hot sand in the summer time it was impossible to grow grass, and so black soil from Sandusky was transported on scows to the Point in order to grow a beautiful green lawn. It is hardly possible to comprehend that from the small investment of Jacob Kuebler, B. F. Dwelle, Louis Adolph and A. J. Stoll, Cedar Point now owned and operated by The G. A. Boeckling Co., is a three million dollar investment.

In conclusion I wish to call my readers attention to the fact that before the first dance hall was built, only a few fishermen's shacks dotted the bay shore line north of the present landing, and also a government light house.

*> SOME NEEDED CORRECTIONS:

~ Actually, none of the four men involved with the enterprises of the 1880s were contemporaneously recorded to have been associated, in any way, with any of the independent "bath house" enterprises prior to the year 1882. (Mr. Adolph and Mr. Stoll only owned the portion of this former "peninsula" upon which the present-day resort is still located. The earlier enterprises were either at Mr. Biemiller's property, or else at the public "Carrying Grounds" area, eastward of Biemiller.) [Note that "Slate Cut" is an obscure historical reference to an area of the Lake Road in the general vicinity of the entrance to the old "Chaussee" roadway.]

~ B.F. Dwelle was the only one (of those four men) who actually established the first resort upon this specific area. (Although Mr. Adolph and Mr. Stoll were the owners of this specific land, but until 1887, Dwelle was simply leasing their land. Dwelle's actual business-partner during his 1882-1887 enterprise, was Capt. Wm. J. Slackford.) [Initially, no alcoholic-beverages were sold by this specific enterprise. (That policy may not have changed until 1888.)]

~ The partnership of the four men, was technically formed in 1887, and was specifically named the Cedar Point Pleasure Resort Company. (Mr. Osterman failed to mention that the actual official name of the expanded '1888' resort, was: 'Cedar Point Pleasure Resort'.)

~ The first season of 'Cedar Point Pleasure Resort' was in 1888. (So, if indeed a severe rainstorm perhaps occurred on the first days of that '1888' season, it obviously had no connection to the Johnstown Flood of 1889).

Because Mr. Osterman was likely an actual eyewitness to most of his other assertions, they can be considered to be otherwise accurate. Perhaps the most pertinent assertion, (especially because he specifically emphasized it), was :

"before the first dance hall", obviously meaning, of course, before Dwelle's ('1883') structure which Osterman had already mentioned, "only a few fishermen's shacks" were in the area which eventually became the resort of the 21st-Century.

Which would indicate that there were no direct-predecessor enterprises, there, which connected to the present-day resort.

[Also meaning, therefore, that the present-day resort was begun by B.F. Dwelle, (and, incidentally, with the assistance of Capt. Slackford, as its 'manager' and its water-transportation aspect).

Those facts are also confirmed in other contemporaneous accounts.]